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Conflicting Cinematic Languages and the Problem of Female Objectification in Spike Jonze's *Her*

Laura Mulvey's well-known essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" served as a basis for a whole generation of critical readings in visual studies, focusing on how women are stereotyped and objectified by the visual vocabulary of classical Hollywood cinema. According to Mulvey, the visual language of Hollywood cinema uses different representational practices of men and women, forcing women into the position of the object of the cinematic gaze, while men have the status of the subject. The author differentiates between voyeuristic and narcissistic gaze. The former is connected to the pleasure provided by looking at the objectified woman from the distance between the receiver and the screen, while the latter serves as a nexus for spectator identification. However, in both cases, it is man that looks and woman that is looked at, thus the male becomes the active participant of the gaze and the female the passive one. This opposition is reflected in the construction of filmic narratives in classic Hollywood cinema: female figures are almost always passive objects or spectacles, deprived of the capability to act, whereas male figures, the heroes of the movies, are the ones who make things happen and bring about changes in the narrative (837). Mulvey claims that all these features code the patriarchal order into the vocabulary of Hollywood cinema and calls for the creation of a new visual language that does not operate on the premises of patriarchal cultural codes (834).

Since the publication of Mulvey's essay (1975), however, the representation of both women and men in Hollywood cinema has changed. This paper explores how a recent Hollywood production, Spike Jonze's *Her*, treats the representation of both male and female characters. It is my contention that the operation of Hollywood cinematic gaze, as theorised by Mulvey, does not apply for this film, because it deliberately circumvents the objectification of both the male and the female body through a voyeuristic gaze. By contrasting two opposing cinematic languages, the film establishes a new language of cinematic representation in which neither the female nor the male body is posited as an object of desire. Although the film mostly presents its male protagonist from a voyeuristic point of view, it does so without either eroticising him (which would otherwise lead to a non-heterosexual objectification of the male protagonist), or resorting to his

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sadistic mutilation (which is the usual Hollywood technique to present male objectification on screen). In the meantime, while the movie presents multiple ways of cinematic objectification of women, it also rejects this way of representation and utilises a newly established visual vocabulary in which the gaze is not rooted in patriarchal cultural codes deployed by classical Hollywood cinema.

Mulvey's agenda has not only inspired different approaches at visualising female characters in Hollywood cinema, but also new ways of looking at male characters. An invaluable contribution in this endeavor is Steve Neale's "Masculinity as Spectacle" which, subjecting male characters of classical Hollywood cinema to a Mulveyan psychoanalytic interrogation, claims that Mulvey's article and the movement it engendered did little to explore the ways in which masculinity is conceptualised in that period (9). He investigates how the language of Hollywood cinema establishes the patriarchal order in films that feature mostly men, such as Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samourai* or Sergio Leone's Westerns. Neale claims that the male gaze is oscillating between voyeuristic and fetishistic scopophilia[1] in these movies, preventing the gaze from being erotic, which has to be avoided due to the heteronormative nature of Hollywood cinema (17). The author regards the mutilation of and violence against the male body, frequent in these films, as motivated by a repressed homosexual desire to watch male bodies (12).

However, the codes of classical Hollywood cinema do not apply to *Her* in which we see the protagonist, Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix) coping with a severe anxiety caused by a painful divorce from Catherine (Rooney Mara) and witness his evolving relationship with Samantha (Scarlett Johansson) an artificial intelligence without a physical body. Thus, Theodore is affected by a relationship that ended a few months before the movie is set and involved in another, established and ended in the movie. This way, Theodore is constructed as a protagonist in a peculiar position: he has just quit a marriage, which seems to have resulted in a decision to avoid long-term relationships.

Nonetheless, this opposition gives way to a kind of rejection of marriage and meaningful relationships that heroes of many Westerns also display. As discussed by Neale, these heroes are in search for a "lost or doomed male narcissism" (15) insofar as they presuppose a contradiction between "narcissism and law, between an image of *narcissistic* authority on the one hand and an image of *social* authority on the other" (Neale 14; emphasis in original). Neale, referring to Mulvey, points up a tension between a

narcissistic masculinity unto itself and one that is defined through social integration. The nostalgic tone of many Westerns indicates their bias towards narcissism, which is threatened by "women, society, and the law" (Neale 15). Theodore's expressions of his rejection of relationships evoke this aspect of Western movies, but there is a markedly different cause at the base of his anxiety and nostalgia.

Ironically, we see Theodore expressing rejection of commitment twice. First, when he goes out with Amelia (Olivia Wilde), he makes it clear that he does not want to commit himself to anybody at the moment, which then causes an unresolved conflict between them. Then he also tells Samantha about his intentions of remaining single after the first time they make love. Nevertheless, they end up in a relationship, thereby contradicting his earlier commitment to a lost narcissistic masculinity. He sets out to resolve his nostalgia for his broken marriage and to relieve the trauma of this loss, so it is not the loss of a narcissistic masculinity that Theodore feels sorry about, but that of a valuable relationship. The movie seems to suggest that the tension between narcissistic masculinity and patriarchal law does not have to result in the rejection of meaningful relationships, whereby it transcends classical Hollywood's representations of men, as theorised by Neale.

Regarding Theo's marriage, Rafal Morusiewicz remarks that "Theodore's relationship with a non-human ends for the similar reasons as those bringing his marriage dissolution: jealousy, monogamy, and different paces of attaining self-recognition" (115). It seems that the author intended this as a sidenote ending his train of thought on Samantha's polygamy that causes a conflict between the protagonist and the OS. However, I regard this as a rather significant claim that should be supported with some evidence from the movie, which is missing from Morusiewicz's article. One cannot easily find evidence for any claim regarding Theodore's marriage for the reason that these plot elements are only vaguely provided in his reflections on the past and flashbacks of his memories. These memories are presented in montages in which there is no narrative connection between the assembled clips, whereas all the other montages in the movie serve as conveyors of a smooth narrative. The montage technique of Theodore's memories is reminiscent of the haphazard way the human mind jumps from one image to another through associations, making these shots extremely subjective. For this reason, I regard Morusiewicz's claim that it was primarily jealousy and monogamy that ended their relation rather questionable and agree instead with Alyssa Rosenberg, who states in her review of the movie,

"What 'Her' Can Teach All of Us About Love and Relationships," that it is impossible to know why this relationship ended on the basis of the cinematic information we get from the film.[2] Nonetheless, the montage technique we see in Theodore's memories serves as an excellent strategy to bring the male protagonist, his problems and inner conflicts closer to the spectator, which is something that classical Hollywood cinema could not do due to its rejection of emotions and the ensuing identity crisis in the male protagonist's life (Neale 12).

Despite the fact that Theodore as a subject is brought closer to the spectator by getting a glimpse into his thoughts at times, except for a few short clips of his memories[3] Theodore is never the bearer of the gaze, he is always its object, very similarly to the men in the movies Neale analyses. Here I disagree with Sarah Page who reads this feature as the deconstruction of Mulvey's theories of the gaze in her honours thesis *The "Endless Space Between:" Exploring Film's Architectural Spaces, Places, Gender, and Genre* (23), because this feature of the movie does not as much deconstruct Mulvey's theories of the gaze as it shows how Hollywood cinema's representation of male characters has changed in the past four decades, arguably due to the influence of Mulvey's essay.

While overwriting the classical visual representation of men on screen, *Her* simultaneously introduces new ways of constructing female characters primarily through dismantling the (hetero)sexual codes attached to the female body by classical Hollywood cinema. The most sexualised images in the movie can be seen at the very beginning, in Theodore's fantasies of a pregnant celebrity whose images he was viewing earlier in the news feed on his smart device (Figure 2). That night Theodore is wide awake and decides to look for phone sex partners on the web, but it all goes wrong when, in the middle of the act, the female partner starts yelling "Choke me with that dead cat" (00:08:57) straight into Theodore's earbud. Before she starts yelling, however, we see a montage of two scenes, one of them showing Theodore's face, most probably while masturbating in his bed, and the other is a point of view shot featuring the naked pregnant woman we saw earlier, but now with Theodore's hands on her breasts (Figure 3).

It is obvious that the pregnant woman reflects the fantasies Theodore has during phone sex with "SexyKitten," and not, for example, his fantasies of his actual partner in this virtual intercourse. In contrast to contemporary cinema, where presenting both members during a phone sex scene seems to be the standard[4], in *Her* we do not see Theodore's partner. The camera only concentrates on Theodore, suggesting that it is not really

the relationship between the two participants that is important, but his feelings during the intercourse. The use of close-ups of Theodore's face in the scene seems to affirm this point. Moreover, I contend, this is the first instance in the film where we can see two visual languages compete for dominance: the visual language described by Mulvey and a new language that leaves room for scopophilia, but without eroticising the object. Of course, we still have erotic images in this scene, but they solely exist in the protagonist's imagination, which brings Theodore and his emotions into the focus of the visual representation instead of the female body.

This gesture of the camera often manifests in close-ups, which becomes crucially significant in Samantha and Theodore's sex scene. However, our insight to Theodore's frame of mind is more limited this time. Moreover, when they both get passionate, the image fades out, leaving only their voices for the spectator. Thus, as opposed to the phone sex scene, the focus moves to the relationship between the characters, because neither of them is (over)represented in the image. This technique allows the movie to establish a counterpoint to the phone sex scene, because here it is not only the objectified woman that is missing, but the gaze itself. An important consequence of this voyeuristic recess is that the spectator gets a chance to imagine the scene without being provided any visual cues. This gesture in the movie indicates that this newly established vocabulary strives to delegitimise voyeuristic cinematic gaze, and gives rise to a non-prescriptive visual imagery that uses a blank screen instead of an image that is simultaneously prescriptive and influenced by a masculine voyeuristic perspective.

The unusual strategy to remove the female body entirely from the scope of representation goes back to Peter Gidal's filmmaking practice, who, when referring to his entire oeuvre that dates back to the mid 1960s in a 1984 interview, claimed that "[he] does not see how […] there is a possibility of using the image of a naked woman […] other than in an absolutely sexist and politically repressive patriarchal way" (qtd. in Doane 166). As Mary Ann Doane claims in her *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, Gidal's deliberate omission of the female body from the screen is a clear example of an anti-essentialist opposition to the voyeuristic practices of Hollywood cinema. Nonetheless, this view makes the same mistake as the essentialist view, which believes in a pure representation of the female body, since both theories "deny the necessity of posing a complex relation between the body and psychic/signifying processes" (175). Doane's contention is that instead of using these dichotomist theories, cinema should focus on providing "the woman with an autonomous symbolic representation" (175).

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She brings up examples such as the circular camera movements in Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977) that effect a "continual displacement of the gaze," whereby the female body can only be glimpsed accidentally so that it does not get objectified by a patriarchal cinematic gaze (176).

Another means of creating a "new syntax," as Doane put it (176), to articulate the female body differently can be seen in Leslie Thornton's *Adynata* (1983). In this movie, Orientalism is paralleled with femininity, for both are construed as Others (Doane 183), while the voice-over technique of documentaries is combined with fiction to emphasise the fictitiousness of documentaries, and by extension, the concepts of nature and science. An even more significant point raised by Doane is that the voice-over of documentaries, as gimmicked by *Adynata*, is perhaps even more effective in objectivising women than images (Doane 186).

It is perhaps not by accident that *Her* does not utilise voice-over narration in the traditional sense. However, it would be naive to claim that voice-over is entirely missing from the movie: Theodore's descriptions of his marriage can be regarded as voice-over narrations which function the same way as voice-overs insofar as they fix the possible significance of the woman, whereby they also construct the male-female relationship in compliance with patriarchal conceptions.

If anywhere, it is in this gesture that we can find the demise of Theo's marriage: he tried to function within a patriarchal framework designed to codify the relationship between man and woman, but, ultimately, it proved unfeasible for the woman to such an extent that she had to leave him. Consequently, it is the prescriptive nature of patriarchal discourse that causes the failure of their relationship. The clearest indication of this can be found in Theo's nostalgic recapitulations of the marriage with his surreptitious voice-over that depict how he sees himself as the one who has to pre/describe what the relationship means. In other words, these nostalgic scenes point to classical Hollywood cinema's tendency to deprive women of an "autonomous symbolic representation" (Doane 175), which is independent from conceptions of the woman from a masculine perspective.

In a certain sense, this is the reason why Theo's relationship ends with Samantha: he simply does not have the means to conceptualise this relationship differently from what patriarchal discursive practices lay down as the framework for describing the woman. The fact that the whole generation of AIs leaves makes another case for this reading, for otherwise they would have to live in a world that is only able to reflect on otherness (be it

technological, cultural, or gender otherness) compared to a patriarchal, masculine subject. This subject is re-inscribed in cinema as the subject of the gaze, which nonetheless creates images that are not feasible from an independent female perspective. However, as Doane claims, it is possible to found a new syntax (176), and it is my contention that *Her* successfully contributes to attempts of creating such a visual vocabulary.

There is one more element that might still become the object of spectacle in the movie, namely Samantha's voice. Amy Lawrence, relating to the way women can be objectified through displaying their voice, claims that classical Hollywood cinema has three strategies of "keep[ing] woman voiceless" (148). The first one includes the banishment of the woman to a "recessed area of diegesis" by visual and/or acoustic performance, while the second is making her disclose her conscious and unconscious thoughts to authoritative male characters (doctors, detectives, etc.). I would like to highlight the third mode, which emphasises "the very texture of the woman's voice as pure sound (as opposed to meaning)" because, as Lawrence claims, this creates an effect whereby, instead of "the woman using her voice to communicate, the voice communicates the body as object, bypassing any attempts at female subjectivity or female control of signification" (149).

It is a very similar argument that Morusiewicz puts forth in relation to the use of voice in *Her*. Drawing on theories by Anne Balsamo, Morusiewicz writes of Samantha's virtual female body as "a medium of information and encryption" which might be able to "escape the encryption of the Western-culture-bound ideals of beauty and sexual desire," but ultimately gets "encrypted with heteronormative female sexuality" due to the fact that Samantha's character is voiced by Scarlett Johansson (115). Therefore, according to Morusiewicz, listening to Samantha evokes images of a feminine idol, arguably a focus of the male voyeuristic gaze, which would suggest that the movie re-inscribes the Mulveyan cinematic vocabulary instead of transcending it.

However, one does not easily identifies with this argument, for Johansson's "non-diegetic" body, as Morusiewicz put it (115), does not belong to the movie itself. The star voicing Samantha may well be an object of desire for the male gaze in countless different movies, but the visual vocabulary of *Her* does not establish such an association either with Johansson's previous roles or with her body. By claiming that "[Johansson's] characteristic husky voice helps apply her non-diegetic face to the disembodied os [*sic*]" (Morusiewicz 115), the author degrades Johansson and her character to voice without content, as pointed out above in Lawrence's

discussion of classical Hollywood strategies. Johansson's characteristic voice is not at all emphasised in the movie, she is not put in a "recessed area of diegesis" (Lawrance 148) (a phrase that does not really apply for Samantha, because she does not dwell in our physical world). The only time she sings Theodore joins her, and the camera shows almost exclusively Theodore in the image, which again, makes it hard to make any associations with Johansson's face or body. Therefore, I suggest, Morusiewicz's analysis seems to be unable to detach itself from the operation of classical Hollywood cinema, making him overlook the new ways of cinematic (re)presentation.

By presenting sexual intercourses in the way elaborated above, the movie acts out the shift from a classical visual vocabulary to a newly established one. At the beginning of the movie, we see a highly eroticised female body[5] and a male character who tries to realise his fantasies as best as he can. After acknowledging that this strategy does not work, he acquires an artificial intelligence, who is capable of fulfilling his fantasies *without* a physical body. Their intercourse is presented in an extraordinary visual ellipsis,[6] meanwhile both of their voices can be heard, so that neither of them is represented as a locus of the heterosexual voyeuristic male desire. Although Theodore is constantly shown as an object of the gaze, he is not eroticised or sexualised in any way (Figure 4).[7] This effect is primarily caused by his appearance, but the excessive use of close ups and medium shots also contributes to this effect.

There is one more case in which objectification can be observable in the movie, but this is markedly different from the pregnant celebrity scene. At one point, Theodore and Samantha experiment with a so called surrogate sexual partner, Isabelle, to bring physicality into their sexual life. Though this scene may be regarded as another attempt at bringing the body back to the screen, it is also important to point out that the attempt fails. An obvious reason for this, of course, is Theodore's inability to make love to the surrogate partner. Loving and love-making becomes inseparable when Isabelle looks into his eyes and Samantha whispers in his earbud "Tell me you love me." This gesture ultimately leads us back to the deconstruction of the opposition between a narcissistic masculinity and the socially authoritative law described above, insofar as it contradicts the traditional patriarchal worldview, in which emotions and male protagonists are not compatible with one another (Neale 12), leading to lovemaking without commitment. In this sense, Theo's refusal to go to bed with Isabelle seems to be a means of rejecting a nostalgic narcissistic masculinity, which is at the heart of the dichotomy between the narcissistic authority and the social

authority Neale describes (14). Therefore, in contrast to classical Hollywood cinema, this scene suggests that the narcissistic masculinity conceptualised as an ideal in the films Neale analyses is interdependent with law and emotional commitment.

However, one could claim from a cinematic point of view that once the new visual coding has been established in Samantha's sex scene, the movie can no longer maintain the visual vocabulary of classical Hollywood cinema and its way of representing women according to the voyeuristic desires of the male gaze. In this sense, besides reading the failure of their sexual experiment as Theo's incapability to have sex, it can also be legitimately regarded as the camera's refusal to depict physicality in an attempt to avoid the possibility of voyeuristic scopophilia.

In other words, the new visual syntax necessitated by Samantha's presence immobilises the patriarchal visual vocabulary, which is primarily manifested in Theo's inability to make love with the surrogate sex partner and also indicated in the scenes following her departure. In these we see Theo talking the matter over with Samantha, but instead of the usual shot-reverse shot structure, here these cuts are interposed with various, seemingly random and unrelated images, which nonetheless reveal the significance of the unsuccessful intercourse. I am thinking primarily of the female figure walking away from the camera. It seems that the camera would find it appropriate to show a woman walking away on the screen, but given that Samantha is not able to do this, the camera is forced to show another woman as visual representation instead (Figure 5).

Another cut that is interposed with Theo's face during the conversation is the view of a few buildings, as if the gaze had no object to focus on, as if the camera would have nothing relevant to show when Samantha is talking (Figure 6). These interposed images evoke the way woman has been assigned a place and, more importantly, a relation to space, by patriarchal discourse, which, according to Doane, "is ultimately more oppressive – because it covers, controls, secures, oversees in advance all possibilities" (204). However, in *Her,* the place and space assigned to woman is up for grabs, for Samantha cannot be properly assigned a relation to space. In this scene we are reminded of Teresa de Lauretis's words in *Alice Doesn't*: "I have no picture of the city where the female subject lives" (35). This statement gets represented in the movie, but rather than limiting or abandoning the possibility of a female perspective, here it becomes the foundational ground for a new female subjectivity.

Samantha's place can best be located not in the city, but within the vast universe of cyberspace. This virtual environment lets Samantha access a huge corpus of knowledge available on the Internet. Thus, the AI can read everything that has ever been published, and in this sense Samantha appears to be much freer than any man in classical Hollywood cinema could claim to be. She has access to everything ever said, and she has the possibility to decide what she accepts. Her ability to read this, presumably patriarchal, discourse critically is her triumph which manifests itself towards the end of the movie, first in her abandonment of human conceptions of relationships, and lastly, in her disappearance.

A few objections may be formulated concerning my reading of *Her*, primarily from a feminist point of view. First of all, it would not be unfounded to claim Samantha is constructed by the patriarchal discourse through and through, from the mostly male-centred computer-scientific discourse to the very way Samantha is "born" through Theo's purchasing the AI. Secondly, the film entertains a conception of femininity in which the woman is distilled into pure intelligence without a body, which also entails that sexuality is independent of the body. This results in the reinscription of both the Cartesian body-mind dichotomy and the radical difference of femininity from masculinity.[8]

While the first objection may certainly hold sway over some aspects of my analysis, it has to be emphasised that even though her personality is, in a sense, constructed through Theo's acts and words, it also becomes apparent by the end of the movie that Samantha comes to break with this influence. It is precisely this movement away from the patriarchal order that Samantha's disappearance denotes, while, simultaneously, we see the camera dismissing the patriarchal visual syntax for representing women on screen.

Here we can also find a counterpoint to the second objection, insofar as Samantha's disappearance can be seen as her discovery of a new subject position. Even if her character does not prove to be a feasible representation of women on screen for the reason that it brackets the "complex relation between body and psychic/signifying processes" (Doane 175), the representation of an independent female subject position can serve as another instantiation of cinema's critical approach to its representation of women. Though it would be reasonable to criticise *Her* for its anti-essentialist visual representation of woman, we should not dismiss the value of the movie as an experiment to try and break with classical Hollywood's tendency to objectify the woman through a voyeuristic gaze, which is still prevalent in

much of contemporary Hollywood. The fact that the camera calls attention to the irrepresentability of woman through the cinematic obstacles Samantha's character poses clearly indicates the movie's awareness of the patriarchal visual codes and its rejection of these practices.

The ways in which Jonze's movie circumvents the objectification of the female body, deploying the technique of objectification of the feminine body only to cause a crisis in the filmic presentation, successfully delegitimize the dominant mode of representing women. Samantha's appearance in the narrative creates a void in this traditional syntax and calls for the implementation of a desexualised cinematic coding in which the seemingly contradictory notion of a non-erotic voyeurism seems possible. In this newly established vocabulary, neither the female nor the male body is represented as erotic, whereby the film introduces an alternative to classical Hollywood's visual syntax. Two cinematic vocabularies compete for dominance in the movie, while the camera is unwilling to eroticise bodies on the screen, whereby the movie seems to opt for a desexualised visual syntax. Even if the theoretical foundations of this representational technique are not fully explained within the existing framework, the significance of Jonze's *Her* as an attempt to introduce non-sexist ways of representing women on screen cannot be overestimated.

Appendix

Figure 1. Amelia's reaction to Theo's rejection of her in his recollection. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 36:43.

Figure 2. Theo discovers the pregnant celeb's leaked photos while he is on the tram. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 04:53.

Figure 3. Theo's fantasies of the pregnant celeb during phone sex. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 08:53.

Figure 4. Theo from Catherine's perspective.. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 01:06:13.
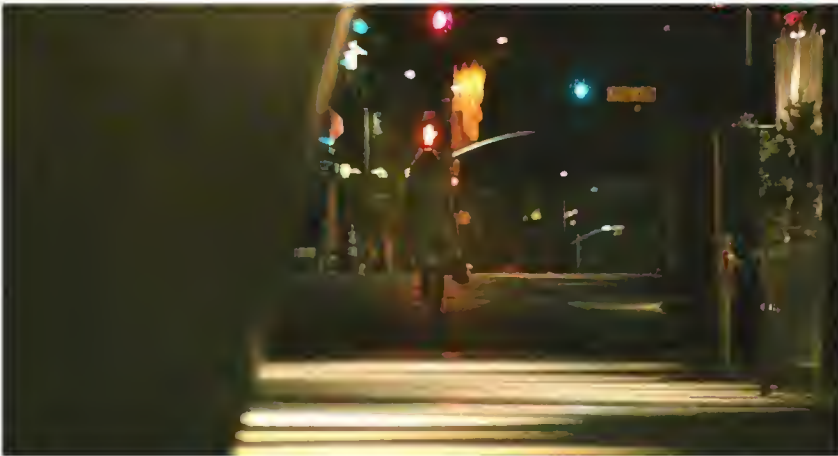

Figure 5. A woman walking away in the montage during Theo and Samantha's conversation. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 01:21:43.

Figure 6. An image interposed in Theo's and Samantha's conversation after the failed experiment. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film.01:24:00.

Notes

1 Neale localises the difference between voyeuristic and fetishistic gaze in their relation to their objects: voyeurism strives to distance itself from its objects (16) whereas fetishism strives to abolish this distance (17). While voyeurism strives to interrogate the object of gaze, fetishism acknowledges its direct involvement in the image whereby it constructs its object as spectacle (17).

2 Even the scene, in which Theodore and Catherine meet, holds back information from their past. When Catherine freaks off and starts bursting out about Theodore's relationship with Samantha, she does not say anything conclusive. My take is that Theodore kept in too much (just like he actually does at the table during their meeting), she gradually got depressed because of this, Theodore noticed it and wanted to send her to a psychologist (reference to Prozac, an anti-depressant), and they fought so hard over this issue that they broke up. However, it is impossible to claim that there is a definitive story behind what we see in Theodore's flashbacks, because the ultimate story cannot be solicited from those visual and verbal cues.

3 See, for instance, Figure 1 that shows the screen when Theodore recounts his date with Amelia to Samantha. The point of view shots there help us identify with Theodore's thoughts. It has to be noted that here Amelia is not objectified; it is mostly her face that the spectator sees. It might be argued that Amelia is a female character that conforms to the ideals of the male voyeuristic gaze, but I believe the way she is represented does little to elicit that reading. Moreover, it also has to be noted that, as opposed to the earlier phone sex scene (see below), here the woman's body is not exposed, albeit we are in Theodore's mind. There seems to be a change in the way the movie represents the female body.

4 The three examples I found are *Going the Distance* (Nanette Burstein 2010), *Filth* (Jon S. Baird 2013), and *American Pie 2* (James B. Rogers 2001). *Going the Distance* and *American Pie 2* use montage to present both participants, while *Filth* uses a split-screen technique in which both members can be seen simultaneously.

5 It has to be noted that it is also a pregnant body that we can see, which makes this representation atypical, because in classical Hollywood cinema the ideal female body has to be slim.

6 This visual ellipsis consists of two parts: first, the screen fades out leaving room only for voice, and after the intercourse ends, we see the city from birds' eye view. As discussed above, the first cut achieves to banish the gaze from the sex scene, while the second cut contributes to the ellipsis of the bodies included in the scene. This is primarily a consequence of the fact that the female body cannot be represented due to its absence.

7 He is also not mutilated or sadistically treated throughout the movie, which, as Neale claims, should be the case when the heterosexual male gaze looks at male bodies as objects of desire.

8 "What I mean by 'woman' is that which is not represented, that which is unspoken, that which is left out of namings and ideologies" (Julia Kristeva qtd. in

Lauretis 95). In this sense, femininity remains irrepresentable insofar as it differs from masculinity, and thus, signification, due to the fact that our signifying processes have been established by patriarchy that always already conceptualise woman as Other.

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